The Most Irish Place in the World? "Irishness" in the Recorded Folk Music of Newfoundland and Labrador

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Abstract: In the past few decades, Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) has been increasingly viewed as inherently Irish in nature. As a North Atlantic island and a former British colony with a boom/bust economic cycle, NL shares many ethnic, geographic, and economic similarities with Ireland. The rocky landscape, foggy weather, friendly people, and the slightly Hiberno-English accent of the capital city often reminds visitors of Ireland. As an extension, Newfoundland and Labrador culture as a whole, and music in particular, is frequently assumed to primarily be a product of Irish heritage. Certainly many Newfoundlanders have Irish ancestry and the history of the Irish in Newfoundland is incredibly important. However, it does not necessarily follow that the music heard today in pubs and on recordings stems directly from that history. The story is much more complex. Today, Newfoundland music that is labelled traditional comprises musics handed down through generations of English, Irish, Scottish, and French ancestors, as well as local compositions, and music exchanged through cultural, economic, or technological flows via printed media, radio, television, recordings, and personal contact between musicians near and far. This article examines how Newfoundland music came to be perceived as Irish through three periods of heightened musical interactions with Irish musicians.

Résumé : Au cours des dernières décennies, Terre-Neuve et le Labrador ont été de plus en plus perçus comme étant intrinsèquement irlandais. En tant qu'île de l'Atlantique nord et ancienne colonie britannique ayant connu des cycles d'expansion et de récession économique, Terre-Neuve partage avec l'Irlande de nombreuses similitudes ethniques, géographiques et économiques. Les paysages rocheux, l'atmosphère brumeuse, les gens chaleureux et le léger accent anglo-irlandais de sa capitale rappellent souvent l'Irlande aux visiteurs. Par extension, on pense donc souvent que la culture de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador dans leur ensemble, et leur musique en particulier, sont avant tout le produit d'un héritage irlandais. Il est certain que de nombreux Terre-neuviens ont une ascendance irlandaise et que l'histoire des Irlandais à Terre-Neuve est extrêmement importante. Cependant, il ne s'ensuit pas nécessairement que la musique que l'on entend aujourd'hui dans les pubs et dans les enregistrements soit directement issue de cette histoire là. L'histoire est bien plus complexe. Aujourd'hui, la musique de Terre-Neuve que l'on qualifie de traditionnelle englobe des musiques transmises par des générations d'ancêtres anglais, irlandais, écossais et français, tout autant que des compositions locales et des airs échangés au fil des courants économiques, culturels ou technologiques par le biais de l'imprimé, de la radio, de la télévision, des disques et des contacts personnels entre musiciens proches ou lointains. Cet article examine la façon dont la musique de Terre-Neuve en est venue à être perçue comme irlandaise à la suite de trois périodes d'interactions musicales plus intensives avec des musiciens irlandais.

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In the past few decades, the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) has been increasingly viewed as inherently Irish in nature. As a North Atlantic island and a former British colony with a boom/bust economic cycle, NL shares many ethnic, geographic, and economic similarities with Ireland. The rocky landscape, foggy weather, friendly people, and the slightly Hiberno-English accent of the capital city, St. John's, often reminds visitors of Ireland. As an extension, NL culture as a whole, and music in particular, is frequently assumed to primarily be a product of Irish ancestry. In fact, the island of Newfoundland has been described by Irish diaspora scholar Brian McGinn as "the most Irish place outside of Ireland" (2000: 8). Irish journalist and historical writer Tim Pat Coogan, was moved to express the view that:

> Nowhere in Canada, or indeed in the world, outside Ireland itself, is the Irish presence so strongly felt as in Newfoundland. In St. John's one is aware of Irish resonances on all sides, resonances of music, personality, physiognomy and history …"Newfoundland music" is unmistakably Irish in influence and Irish music sessions are a feature of the Newfoundland pub scene. (2001: 415, 417)

The assertions in Coogan's statement are based on a visitor's assumption of the centrality of Irishness in NL's sense of place.[1] Certainly many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have Irish ancestry and the history of the Irish in the province is incredibly important. However, it does not necessarily follow that the music heard today in St. John's pubs and on recordings stems directly from *that* history. The story is much more complex. Today, music from NL that is labelled traditional comprises musics handed down through generations of English, Irish, Scottish, and French ancestors, as well as local compositions, and music exchanged through cultural, economic, or technological flows via printed media, radio, television, recordings, and personal contact between musicians near and far. While Coogan and McGinn's statements identifying NL as an Irish place are the most strongly worded, there has been a general trend to align NL with Ireland since the late 1990s. In recent decades, both visitors and residents have privileged the role of Irish music, history, and culture within the tapestry of influences on the traditional music within the province.

It is my theory, inspired by folklorist Pat Byrne's article, "Stage Irish in Britain's Oldest Colony," that much of the island's identification with Ireland—as opposed to any of the numerous other cultures or heritages to be found in the province—is a relatively recent phenomenon (1991: 59). Musically, this identification is fuelled more by factors such as contact with Irish musicians

living or travelling in NL, or radio, television, and recordings, than by a strong and enduring historical-cultural link back to the Emerald Isle. This article will explain how Irish music came to be such an integral element of NL music by exploring how real or imagined personal connections, the recording industry, and political, economic, and cultural change, all worked together to cast NL music and culture as Irish based.

The Irish in Newfoundland and Labrador

There is no doubt that the Irish were an important part of NL's history. Until recently, it was a history that was largely untold.[2] 19th-century historians dismissed the Irish as a poor, working class that were generally "a drunken, disorderly treacherous group requiring constant regulation and control" (Keough 2012: 2). Upon re-examination, historians have discovered the significant role Irish people played in the economic and cultural development of NL.

The Irish who came to NL to work or settle did so along existing trade routes connected to the migratory fishery (Elliot 1992: 22). The majority of 17th -and 18th-century Irish immigrants to NL came from the vicinity of the ports of Waterford and Wexford, the hub of provisions trade for the trans-Atlantic West Country fishery ships. Historian Cyril Byrne postulates that enough Irish settled in NL that it constituted an overseas "Irish colony" from which the pre-famine Irish spread into North America (Byrne 1988: 171). Mannion states that "for much of its early history, Newfoundland had a highly transient, fluctuating population," and this made it "difficult to measure the growth of the permanent population" (1977: 1).[3] Besides seasonal fishermen who decided to stay in the 1700s, the primary Irish immigrations to the island of Newfoundland were from 1811-1816 and 1825-1833 (1977: 7). Newfoundland became an "attractive alternative" for work and immigration in the early 19th century after a population explosion in Ireland (Casey 1986: 211). Unlike many other areas of the Irish diaspora, the Newfoundland immigrations were labour related and predated the mass famine emigrations of the 1840s, which "bypassed Newfoundland almost completely" (Mannion 1977:7). Today, the role of Irishmen in the migratory fishery and in settlement from the 17th to 19th centuries is cited as the primary connection between NL and Ireland.

In the past few decades, there has been a significant rise in contact with Ireland, and the illumination of Irish history in the province reflects this trend, thus countering the earlier emphasis on the island's English and French colonial history (until the 2000s, Aboriginal history and identity had been largely ignored). The importance of declaring one's personal Irish ancestry grew

throughout the 20th century. In 1951, only 14.8% of the province's residents claimed Irish heritage, but this increased to 25% by 2001 (Keough 2008a: 14-16). Since there were no large Irish immigrations during that period, one must assume there was a shift in personal, cultural, and historical identification. In 1996, during Ireland's economic and cultural boom known as the "Celtic Tiger," a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the NL and Irish governments. Subsequently, the exchange of economic and cultural activities has increased significantly and ignited a modern connection between the two North Atlantic islands.

The Shifting Tides of NL Politics, Identity, and Sense of Place

To understand the complexity and changing nature of NL identity and sense of place, one must understand a little of the region's unique political, economic, and immigration history. Although St. John's harbour was the site of the first declaration of British law in North America in 1583, this did not translate into official colonial status until 1824. Due to the rich fishing grounds and its strategic location off the east coast of North America, NL was fought over by the French and English. Into the 18th century, NL was considered an extension of England, a fishing station only, not a place to be provided with significant infrastructure. Responsible government was granted in 1855, and in the early 20th century the island of Newfoundland, with the coast of Labrador, became a self-governing dominion.[4] WWI debts led to the new country's economic demise, prompting England to regain control through a non-democratically appointed Commission of Government (1933-1949). This continued until NL became Canada's newest province in 1949. Over a period of about 35 years in the early- to mid-20th century, NL moved from being an independent country to British rule to a Canadian province with a few quiet revolutionary pen strokes. The whirlwind of shifting political and national identities affected the ways in which Newfoundland and Labradorians perceived and valued their culture and music.

While the Commission was demoralizing, Confederation was polarizing. The decision to join Canada was made through a referendum. The result of the final referendum was 52.3% for Confederation and 47.6% for a return to independence (Bishop-Sterling and Webb 2008: 123).

In the decades following Confederation, there was a massive resettlement program. The program uprooted whole communities and moved them to "growth centres" where they could take advantage of Canada's social services. Between 1954 and 1972, 27,000 residents of the new province moved from

isolated outports to larger communities (Pocius 2000: 20-21). Resettlement was designed to modernize and Canadian-ize the nation's newest citizens. Folklorist Gerald Pocius states that:

> Disrupting the ties of place [through resettlement] gradually had a major impact on cultural perceptions, for communities and the way of life that remained soon became traditionalized–like pre-Confederation life—as *the* genuine Newfoundland culture.... Newfoundland music, painting, and literature all increasingly focused on the theme of resettlement—what was essentially a disruption of place—as leading artists pointed to this particular government program as a destroyer of culture. (2000: 21)

A vision of an idealized rural NL became a potent idea in the 1970s, particularly among the cultural elite. This ideal rejected both Britain's imperialism and Canada's modernity, and instead sought a simpler, rural lifestyle filled with hard work and expressive culture. This vision of the "true" NL aligned with popular concepts of Ireland as another rural, hard-working, friendly, culturally rich, economically marginalized island.[5]

The failing fishery of the 1980s solidified NL's place as the poorest province in Canada, a "have not" place. This was amplified in 1992 when the primary fishery collapsed and the largest stock, the northern cod, was placed under moratorium. The cod fish, that had been the backbone of the NL psyche for centuries, was all but gone. In the following decade, the province lost approximately 48,000 people to outmigration (Higgins 2008). However, 16 years after the moratorium, NL's fate changed suddenly when a large off-shore oil agreement was signed and it gained the much-desired "have" province status in November 2008. This new economic reality had a positive effect on the confidence and cultural outlook of Newfoundland and Labradorians.

Music, Place, and Identity

Considering all the political switcheroos in the first half of the 20th century, Newfoundlanders' collective identity became unsettled, and it, along with their sense of place, has been shifting and changing ever since. Although Benedict Anderson primarily theorized "imagined communities" with respect to nation states, he acknowledged that they can also arise from a "deep horizontal comradeship" based on regional location (2006: 7).

Identity and sense of place are related, yet they are also distinct. Identity is used to categorize and associate a person with a set of values or habits. Abrahams examines identity as a core term of expressive culture but warns that any assumption of universal acceptance or ubiquity can cause confusion (2003: 198). A sense of place is less categorical than identity, and is connected to ideas and experiences of location. Cultural geographer Kent Ryden states that "a sense of place results gradually and unconsciously from inhabiting a landscape over time, becoming familiar with its physical properties, accruing history within its confines" (1993: 38). A sense of place encompasses all "those things that add up to a feeling that a community is a special place, distinct from anywhere else" (S. Stokes, Watson, and Mastran 1997: 192).

Although the concept of place is not necessarily agreed upon between disciplines, in general, the idea of place has moved from a simple geographical location towards a socio-cultural process and experiential concept (Withers 2009: 638). Charles Withers considers this to be a "spatial turn" in the discourse of space and place, in which place becomes "social practice" and a "process [for] accounting for the uneven movement of ideas over space and time" (638-639). Social geographer Tim Cresswell explains that place is "not just a thing in the world, but a way of understanding the world" (2004: 11). Anthropologist Margaret Rodman encourages us to think of places in terms of "multilocality" and "multivocality":

> It is time to recognize that places, like voices, are local and multiple. For each inhabitant, a place has a unique reality, one in which meaning is shared with other people and places. The links in these chains of experienced places are forged of culture and history. (1992: 643)

Particularly relevant to this discussion is Rodman's argument "that regional relations between *lived spaces* [her emphasis] are developed through infusing experience in one place with the *evocation* [my emphasis] of other events and other places" (644). Following this line of thought, the "Irishness" evoked in NL is not necessarily based on actual lived experiences in Ireland, but on an imagined notion of Irishness as experienced in NL. Patrick O'Flaherty claims that by the mid-20th century, the surviving Irish immigrant culture was a "sentimental paddyism, as much shaped by New York ethnic posturing and the singing of the McNulty Family on the radio as by any authentic influence from across the Atlantic" (1986: 6). In much the same way that a Scottish identity was deliberately chosen, highlighted and constructed in Nova Scotia (McKay 1994: 206-212), NL has privileged a discourse of Irish cultural heritage.

Folk and traditional musics are particularly associated with place, community, and identity. Ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes argues that "music is socially meaningful not entirely, but largely, because it provides means by which people recognise identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them" (1994a: 5). Leyshon, Matless, and Revill state that "to consider the place of music is not to reduce music to its location, to ground it down into some geographical baseline, but to allow a purchase on the rich aesthetic, cultural, economic and political geographies of musical language" (1998: 4). However, we are so conditioned to consider music, particularly traditional music, as belonging to a particular locality, music that seems out of place can be difficult to understand. Stokes suggests that we are quick to consider "music out of place [or lacking a geographical identifier] … [as] music without meaning" (1994b: 98). Thus, we instinctively attempt to associate unfamiliar music with a type of geographical- or category-based music we do recognize. For example, modern NL music is often described as Irish music by those who want a quick and well-known reference point by which to characterize it. Similarly, Cape Breton music is frequently described as Scottish, although it has developed into its own unique tradition (Cranford 1985: 13; Doherty 2006; Feintuch 2004; Graham 2006).

I understand "sense of place" to be a less bounded and loaded concept than identity. Senses of place can also provide a link between the lived experience of a place and the sense of community created there. A shared sense of place can be unifying. For the purpose of this research, I have defined "musical senses of place" as an evocative and imaginative term that recognizes music's power to bring to mind a flood of associations that encompasses the socio-cultural impressions and experiences of place. As an imagined concept, musical senses of place incorporate a multitude of fluid and changeable experiences, including history/heritage, identity, emotions, memories, and real or imagined understandings of connections to other places, all of which are evoked by "musicking" (Small 1998). This research examines how musical senses of place are constructed through perceived cultural history/heritage, recordings, performances, and interactions with other musicians. In the case of Newfoundland music, Rodman's idea of "multilocality" works very well. Newfoundland musical senses of place are constructed through reference to the rural and urban, and the multiple constructions of place that connect Newfoundland to Ireland and Irish New York, among other places. Musical senses of place are not only tied to the locations in which music is produced but also include the ideas about places that inform a musician's, or listener's, interaction with a piece of music.

Periods of Irishness

My research has focused on three periods of heightened musical activity and interactions between Irish and Newfoundland musicians in the 20th and early 21st centuries. There was certainly Irish music in NL prior to the periods of Irishness discussed here. For example, fishermen and immigrants brought music with them and shared it in labour contexts. Shops in St. John's imported Irish song books and sheet music during the 19th and early 20th centuries, such as *Moore's Irish Melodies* and *The Hiberoia* [sic] *Collection: 200 Irish Jiggs, Reels, Hornpipes, Songs, Dances Etcetera For the Violin, Flute, Cornet, Clarionett* [sic] (Osborne 2013: 112). Later, the Methodist radio station VOWR was known to play Irish rebel songs (Brophy and Brown 2008, interview, May 12).

The three periods discussed here coincide with significant political, economic, and/or social changes for NL. I have focused on one musical group, or figure, for each period. I define the first two periods by following Byrne (1991). I further extend his research by adding a third period. The first case study focuses on the Irish-American vaudevillians, the McNulty Family, who became popular in NL via the radio in the 1940s. The second period is characterized by the Irish trio Ryan's Fancy, who lived in the St. John's area in the 1970s. They fully engaged with the community on a personal level and promoted NL culture on their television show. The third period explores the exchanges encouraged through Irish fiddler Séamus Creagh (1946-2009), who came to St. John's in 1989.[6] The impact of these musical groups on the recording repertoire of NL has been significant and is indicative of larger musical-cultural ideas and trends.

The First Period: The McNulty Family and Becoming Canadian

The decades after Confederation saw major changes in almost every aspect of Newfoundlanders' and Labradorians' lives and identities. Life quickly modernized in post-Confederation NL as roads were built and telephones, electricity, and indoor plumbing spread across the island.

During this tumultuous time, businessman J.M. Devine, owner of The Big 6 clothing store in St. John's, sponsored two radio shows per week (ca. 1944-1974) highlighting the music of a New York-based Irish-American vaudeville group called The McNulty Family.[7] The radio programs were popular and influential at a time when perceptions of what constituted suitable local musics for broadcast were still forming. The McNulty Family recordings

prominently featured the diatonic button accordion and regularly brought the mother, daughter, and son group into the soundscape of NL homes. Devine and the McNultys became acquainted. The McNultys even recorded Devine's poem, "When I Mowed Pat Murphy's Meadow," as a song in 1950. In 1953, the group toured Newfoundland for two months to sold-out shows across the island. The McNulty Family learnt the local song "Star of Logy Bay" while on tour, and subsequently recorded it to the Irish melody, "The Hills of Glenshee." Indeed, of the three melodic settings of the "Star of Logy Bay" known in NL, the most popular is the McNulty Family's version (Hiscock 2003: 9). I contend that, due to Devine's preference for their music and its regular broadcast on *The Big 6 Show*, the McNulty family had a major influence on the local recording industry, and subsequently the nature of Irish music within the Newfoundland music tradition at large. Unlike other popular musicians who toured or distributed records within the province, the McNulty Family had a continuing and consistent presence in the NL soundscape via radio that extended their reach beyond their performances. The recording of local songs increased Newfoundlanders' feelings of connection to the group.

Early NL recording artists such as accordionist Wilf Doyle (1925-2012) and singer John White (1930-2009) re-recorded a lot of McNulty repertoire that was then re-recorded again by later musicians and treated as NL music. Fully 50% of the 100 McNulty Family songs available on recordings at The Big 6 store in 1953 at the start of the McNulty tour were re-recorded in the province several hundred times over the next six decades. At the time of my analysis, songs that may have been learned from McNulty recordings represented a full 10% of the entries in the *Discography of Newfoundland and Labrador* (Centre for Newfoundland Studies 2009: np; Osborne 2013: 380-390; see also McGraw 2010). As radio historian Jeff Webb points out, songs played over the radio had the power to change the repertoire of local singers (2008: 71). It is curious, however, that upon examining the song index at the province's largest archive of ethnographic collections, Memorial University of Newfoundland's Folklore and Language Archive, the McNulty repertoire is not as prevalent in the field recording collections as in the recording repertoire. This analysis supports Halpert's assertion that "modern commercial music" is adopted "selectively" by musicians (1975: v). Many of these re-recorded McNulty songs have subsequently been naturalized as NL traditional music and are assumed to have been brought by Irish immigrants. In comparison, very few McNulty song recordings *not* stocked by The Big 6 have entered the recording repertoire.

I agree with Webb's argument that early NL radio helped to create an "imagined community" of listeners on a large island that was otherwise

disjointed (2008: 14). At the time, radio listening was limited both by programming and battery power (28). With few radio stations to choose from, one show could command almost an entire listening audience. The radio show was a social event that often brought friends and family together to share in the experience. Folklorist Martin Lovelace has suggested that listening to the radio in the mid-20th century was a more "intimate" experience that felt akin to a "real social interaction" than it does today (1986: 19). Music can trigger powerful memories. These memories are occasioned by the radio media but tied into a musical sense of place. For example, Monty Barfoot associates *The Big 6 Show* and McNulty Family music with spending time with his late father at his uncle's house:

> I always liked [the McNulty Family], ever since I was knee high to a grasshopper; when my dad was living we'd have *The Big 6 Show* on, on Thursday nights and no one could make a sound. He really loved them. We used to go into my uncle's [house] on Mount Cashel road and they had a big stack [of McNulty 78s] on the coffee table … and the old gramophone.… They were always playing them there, I always liked them. I would have been 7 or 8 [years old]. He certainly did love the McNultys, he loved them … they just sang lovely songs, they sang songs about everything. (interview, March 12, 2010)

Why did the McNulty Family become so popular in NL? Pat Byrne theorizes that after a crisis of national and political identities, McNulty songs about exile and longing for a homeland that no longer existed resonated with Newfoundlanders' and Labradorians' political and cultural experiences (1991: 66-67). As time went on, I believe the music started to resonate intergenerationally, a resonance resulting from a combination of memories of listening to the McNultys as a family and a musical sense of self and community. Since the McNultys were a major presence on early NL radio, they became a part of a shared musical soundscape that almost everyone knew and heard throughout the island. Webb argues that Newfoundlanders "valued [radio] programming that reflected the Newfoundland people to themselves" (2008: 71, 81). So, when people hear the McNultys' repertoire, it triggers memories of their families and early lives. The McNulty Family music became part of the fabric of the NL repertoire, a type of music that Newfoundlanders expected to hear on their radios, and in turn, became a part of the musical sense of place. The group became so accepted in the broader imagined community that when Ryan's Fancy sought Eileen McNulty-Grogan for an interview in the

mid-1970s, there was immense confusion about whether or not the McNultys were actually Newfoundlanders (Kellum interview, October 13, 2010). This is not just an amusing piece of trivia. The assumption that the McNultys were Newfoundlanders illustrates not only their importance and inclusion in NL music, but also how electronic mass media can contribute to imagined community development and place-making. The McNultys essentially became Newfoundlanders through their radio play. Their songs and tunes are still being re-recorded today by local musicians, and considered to be part of standard, local repertoire. In 2011, Shanneyganock, a St. John's-based group, released a McNulty tribute album in order to acknowledge the importance of their musical repertoire in NL.

The Second Period: Ryan's Fancy and the NL Cultural Revival

The late 1960s and early 1970s found Newfoundlanders discontented with the largely failed industrial aspirations of Joey Smallwood's provincial government. The St. John's arts and university communities started exploring a nostalgic and anti-modernist view of the "real" NL, symbolized by traditional life in the outports. The 1970s era was a time when artists "rediscovered" NL and declared pride in their rural heritage. Literary figures such as Ted Russell and Ray Guy promoted the rural outport as the symbol of the real NL, while musical groups such as Red Island and Figgy Duff put a new rock-and-roll-inspired spin on local traditional music.[8] Figgy Duff and Ryan's Fancy in particular did local collecting to expand their repertoires of music. Theatre companies such as the Mummers Troupe revitalized vernacular theatre while the comedy troupe Codco poked fun at classic "Newfie" stereotypes to question how Newfoundlanders presented themselves. There was a difference of opinion between those who thought of NL as Irish and those who sought to legitimize and promote NL culture as unique. In many ways, Ryan's Fancy struck a balancing act between the two identities and contributed to the construction of both a NL- and Irish-centred musical sense of place. Unique in its presentation format, the *Ryan's Fancy* show promoted NL rural outport culture by combining folklore fieldwork and documentary-style television.

Composed of three Irishmen, Denis Ryan, Fergus O'Byrne, and Dermot O'Reilly (1942-2007), Ryan's Fancy found the cultural environment in the province to be invigorating, and it inspired them to seek out and learn new local material. When I interviewed Fergus O'Byrne in 2010, he described the general atmosphere of St. John's as being more Irish than other areas of the country, a connection he made due to the similarity of accent and provincial history of Irish immigration. He felt "immersed" in a culture similar to that of Ireland. While

audiences in Ontario enjoyed their music, O'Byrne explained that in NL, "It seemed there was more of an understanding … everybody was either Irish or English or had all this music in the background" (interview, December 3, 2010). He felt that the 1970s was a time when "young people [were] finally discovering that Newfoundland music was something to be proud of" (interview, December 3, 2010). Denis Ryan was surprised to find that:

> A lot of Newfoundland songs had Irish melodies to them … that really blew me away. They had a lot of the same feelings, the songs, the old ballads, the sadness, the immigration, the love, the whole thing. Newfoundland is phenomenal … the music was alive and well. (interview, September 12, 2010)

Compared to the vigorous recording traditions of Ireland or Scotland, there were relatively few recordings of Newfoundland music in the early 1970s (Taft 1975). It was an industry that was about to grow substantially. Recently immigrated Irish musicians felt that they were role models for the transition of traditional music from the kitchen to the stage (Ryan, interview, September 12, 2010). There were only a few active traditional recording musicians at the time, including Omar Blondahl (1923-1993), Wilf Doyle, John White, Ray Walsh, Harry Hibbs (1942-1989), and the television musical group All Around the Circle. Both Ryan's Fancy and the Sons of Erin were a part of this transition and revival. The Irish repertoire recorded by these groups was subsequently re-recorded by local musicians as local music much in the same way that the McNulty repertoire had been and was continuing to be re-recorded (Osborne 2013: 391-403).

Ryan's Fancy maintained a varied career with live performances, recorded albums, and television shows. Ryan's Fancy produced ten separate albums between 1971 and 1982, and were involved in three different television series. Their self-titled television show, *Ryan's Fancy*, aired on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) from 1974 to 1977, and began broadcasting nationally in 1976. This series was different from most of the popular variety-styled shows of the era in that the members of the group traveled to a guest's home community rather than inviting guests into the studio. It was a kind of musical documentary that focused on different aspects of traditional life in NL and the Maritime provinces. For example, they helped to recreate a milling frolic in the Codroy Valley on the island's west coast[9] and a community dance event in a Placentia Bay community that had resisted resettlement.

I contend that the show helped create a strong musical sense of place for Newfoundlanders as they saw their own culture reflected in a nationally popular

show. Producer Jack Kellum says that the show's audiences ranged between 800,000 and one million viewers for the national series (interview, October 13, 2010). At a time when Canada's population was less than 24 million (and NL's was just over half a million), this was a substantial audience. The *Ryan's Fancy* show also offered other Canadians a perspective on NL culture. What sort of information did audiences glean from this popular show? Dayan and Katz's ideas of local primary and non-local secondary audiences are useful here (1985: 61). For the primary audience of Newfoundlanders, the show presented familiar landscapes, people, culture, and communities. Nationally and internationally, secondary audiences would have gathered impressions about the new Canadian province in which, it appeared, expressive culture was rural-based and mediated by Irish musicians.

Similar to *The Big 6 Show*, families gathered together regularly to watch the *Ryan's Fancy* show (Osborne 2013: 277). According to Adams, this sort of audience allows for a "bounded system in which symbolic interaction among persons occurs (a social context)" as well as "a nucleus around which ideas, values and shared experiences are constructed" (1992: 118). In other words, television audiences can become "imagined communities" (Fiske 1993: xvi). The *Ryan's Fancy* show's NL audiences were particularly drawn to the context of the show and the locations it highlighted. Moreover, television and culture share "reciprocal relations" by affecting each other, rather than one simply following the other (Adams 1992: 118). Later Newfoundland musicians looked back to their childhoods for inspiration and came up with a lot of Ryan's Fancy's repertoire (Osborne 2013: 391-403). O'Byrne's and O'Reilly's continued engagement with the community also reinforced relationships and repertoire. As multi-instrumentalist Jason Whelan recalls, "I'd been to see them … We had all the Ryan's Fancy records, I'd even met Dermot and these people when I was really young … but it was years later that I actually started playing the music" (Sutton, Wells, and Whelan interview, April 18, 2008). Bob Hallett of Great Big Sea credits Ryan's Fancy with inspiring him to become a musician, reflecting that "without Dermot O'Reilly, Dennis Ryan and Fergus O'Byrne, aka Ryan's Fancy, I would not be playing music for a living" (2010: 27).

The Third Period: Fiddler Séamus Creagh and Trans-Atlantic Musical Exchanges

The 1980s and 1990s were hard economic decades in NL. The fishery was failing, and a moratorium stopped the Northern cod fishery altogether in 1992. There was massive economic and population decline due to outmigration, all of

which had an impact on the perceived value of culture. During the 1980s, young musicians found NL music embarrassing. With reference to accordion music in particular, and NL recorded traditional music more generally, ethnomusicologist Kelly Best suggests that the accordion and its popular use in country and western music inspired a backlash by many Newfoundland musicians seeking a more "authentic" version of the tradition (2006: 7). Best writes that some musicians felt that the "Newfie" style of the mid- to late-20th century:

> Contaminated the music by mixing it with popular American forms. They appear to see these songs as the sonic equivalent of a bad "Newfie" joke. Perhaps, the sound of an accordion came to represent, for some purists, support of a distasteful stereotype. (7)

Many of today's now prominent musicians turned to more virtuosic and readily available Irish music recordings. Both Whelan and Sutton were inspired by the virtuosity they heard on Irish instrumental recordings, or what Sutton called "High Gear Celtic Music." Whelan remembers his father's record collection:

> I got [the records] and put them aside for a while and never really thought much of it. [I] put them on one day and was just blown away by a couple of De Dannan records … I was just fascinated by bouzoukis and this driving trad[itional] music, which was considerably different [from] the Makem and Clancy stuff, the balladry stuff I'd listened to. I was into [traditional music] long before you'd even admit it, or talk about it, because none of your friends were into it. (Sutton, Wells, and Whelan interview, April 18, 2008)

During the international Celtic "boom" of the 1990s, NL musicians listened to a great number of widely available Irish albums. Irish music represented a larger world to young NL musicians during an economically depressed time for the province. Ireland seemed to have a richer and more respectable tradition that had been validated by the international community, one that was enjoying global popularity as evidenced by the success of the musical theatre production of *Riverdance* and artists like Enya. NL's musical connections to Ireland, represented by groups such as the McNulty Family, Ryan's Fancy, and the Sons of Erin, elevated its stature for some. Given that these earlier groups had laid the sonic groundwork, it was easy to connect NL and Irish music within one's musical sense of place during this third period. But there was a shift in consciousness about the relationship between NL and Irish music. As musicians started to get

to know Irish music and musicians in Ireland better, they returned to NL music with a new appreciation of their similarities and differences. Several prominent NL musicians spent significant time traveling or living in Ireland in order to experience the music and culture they felt was related to their own. As described earlier, the governments of NL and Ireland signed a MOU in 1996, recognizing the historical connections between the two islands, and to enhance economic and cultural exchanges. As a direct result of this government initiative, there was a striking increase in cultural exchanges among artists from all disciplines during the early 2000s (Osborne 2013: 301-304).

In the 1980s and early 1990s, two influential Irish musicians came to live in the province, fiddler Séamus Creagh and flutist Rob Murphy. Their personal interactions with local musicians had a profound impact on the modern connections between NL and Irish musicians. Murphy came to Newfoundland from Cork, Ireland as a doctor in the early 1980s, and stayed for about 15 years. He was a part of a small influx of Irish professionals who traveled to the province for work in the 1980s but returned home in the 1990s when Ireland's economy improved (Strong interview, April 2, 2009).[10] In 1988, Irish fiddler Séamus Creagh visited the province on tour and decided to move there shortly thereafter. Together, Murphy and Creagh helped to introduce the international Irish instrumental music session format to St. John's (Breslin 2011: 48). Murphy even encouraged the development of a chapter of the Irish cultural association *Comhaltas Ceoltóiri Éireann* in St. John's (Osborne 2013: 307). Creagh returned to Ireland in 1993 and subsequently aided many NL musicians in establishing musical ties on the other side of the Atlantic. His subsequent musical career in Ireland was distinguished. He recorded with several highly respected Irish musicians, including Jackie Daly (1995), Kevin Burke (1980), and flutist Hammy Hamilton (ca. 2002). While living in St. John's, Creagh played with the band Tickle Harbour and recorded a solo album, *Came the Dawn* (1994). On this album, he included two tunes composed by NL fiddler Émile Benoit. In 2010, Graham Wells started an annual Féile Séamus Creagh[11] in St. John's to honour Creagh and strengthen the connections between NL and Irish musicians (Féile Séamus Creagh 2011). In September 2011, there was a tribute night dedicated to Creagh at the Cork Folk Festival to which NL musicians Graham Wells and Billy Sutton were invited (Beamish Cork Folk Festival 2010).

The musical exchanges between Cork and St. John's in the past two decades have been numerous. In a conference presentation, Desplanques outlined the many concerts she and Creagh had facilitated on both sides of the Atlantic (2008). The exchange that I have examined in most detail is the *Island to Island: Traditional Music from Ireland and Newfoundland* CD project that involved both Cork and St. John's musicians (Creagh and Desplanques 2003). While the point

of the project was to draw similarities between the two traditions, I thought the differences were more interesting (Osborne 2010). Although the ensembles and sound were similar, the repertoire appeared to be chosen to highlight differences rather than similarities. It is clear that the personal contacts that have developed in Cork and St. John's are the primary reason for maintaining musical exchanges rather than the result of any perceived historical connections.

Conclusions

In the past eight years the economy of NL has changed dramatically, twice. Between 2008 and 2014, an oil deal, national tourism campaign, and hit television show, *Republic of Doyle*, increased Newfoundlanders' confidence in their culture and brought prosperity to the province. However, in 2015 the new economic backbone of the province, oil, plummeted on the world market sending NL into deficit. It remains to be seen what effect this will have on the perception of culture in the province. Overall in the past fifteen years, a musical evocation of Irishness has been replaced with more experiential knowledge of Irish culture resulting from personal interactions and travel. While it is still good practice for NL traditional musicians to be well-versed in Irish music in order to work in international traditional music cultural labour flows, there is starting to be a recognition that Irish and NL music can stand as equal partners, rather than viewing NL music as the forgotten cultural cousin.

This article has argued that Irish music has gained primacy in NL partly due to the province's checkered political and economic history, and partly due to interactions with musicians through personal networks or electronic mass media rather than descending directly from the music of 19th-century immigrants as the general discourse suggests. The idea of Irish identity within NL culture is complex and ever-changing for individuals and the imagined community as a whole. As Irish studies scholar Danine Farquharson asks, "How Irish is Newfoundland?"

> The question of Newfoundland's Irishness inevitably produces one of two all too easy answers. Either there is some innate, unidentifiable connection that one intuits or simply "feels deeply" or the Irishness of Newfoundland is clearly manufactured by well-oiled tourism and cultural heritage campaigns with political and economic agendas. (2008: 10)

I agree with Farquharson that neither of these standard answers is satisfactory; neither is completely wrong or fully correct. Constructed or not, NL has certainly been brought into the imagined community of Irish purview. Both Newfoundlanders and the Irish have embraced the province as part of the Irish diaspora.

It is clear that Irish music learned through the electronic mass media is an important source for NL recording artists. The common thread throughout the case studies discussed here is that musical interactions, personal or imagined, facilitated the adoption of Irish music into the recording repertoire of the province. Musicians were moved to incorporate significant portions of Irish music into their own recording repertoires, particularly that of the musicians discussed in this article, to whom they felt personally connected. These Irish musicians in turn promoted NL music and culture itself to varying degrees and were accepted into the imagined community of Newfoundlanders. This two-way interaction has created the impression that NL and Irish music are intrinsically linked. In seeking reasons for this perceived connection, the Irish immigration and history of the late 18th century and the early 19th century is privileged over 20th-century sources in the discourse surrounding music and NL's general musical sense of place. Yet, despite the impression that NL music is primarily Irish, it has *not* actually been overwhelmed by Irish music. As pointed out by Terry MacDonald in his article "Where have all the (English) Folksongs Gone?" all sorts of English and Newfoundland songs are still performed, although they have been recast as Irish-sounding through instrumentation and arrangements (1999: 189).

In recent years, NL appears to have mirrored Ireland's economic roller coaster. Despite current financial woes, both islands emerged from a stereotype of being poor, uneducated backwaters to economic and cultural power and respect. The popular assumption that all Irish-Newfoundland music stems from immigration serves to validate, link, and authenticate NL culture with a strong culture not involved in NL's political history. This is particularly true for current musicians who are establishing strong connections to Ireland and travel back and forth regularly based on the popular view of how Irish music became dominant in Newfoundland and Labrador. This research demonstrates that the Newfoundland tradition is complex and "multi-local" with reportorial debts throughout Western Europe and North America, and yet it can still stand as its own unique tradition. This recognition opens up space for 21st-century traditional musicians to positively construct a world-class, multi-faceted, multi-locational, and multi-vocal Newfoundland musical sense of place.

Notes

1. Thank you to the following funding agencies: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), and the J.R. Smallwood Foundation for supporting this research.

The official name of the province changed from Newfoundland (NF) to Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) in 2001. It is customary to refer to people from the whole province as Newfoundlanders. However, Labradorians do have a distinct identity from islanders. It is not within the scope of this article to tease out the differences between Labradorian and Newfoundlander identities. The reader should keep in mind that people in different parts of the province identify themselves with diverse ancestries including, but not limited to, First Nations, Inuit, and parts of Western Europe. In contrast to the general usage of the word, I will use the term Newfoundlander primarily to refer to people from the island portion of the province.

2. Historical geographer John Mannion (especially 1974, 1977, 1986, 1987, 1993-4, 1998-9, 2000b and 2001) and historian Willeen Keough (2008a, 2008b, 2012) have been at the forefront of examining the role of Irish people in early Newfoundland history.

3. Mannion has identified three types of immigration to Newfoundland: 1) seasonal with the fishery; 2) a "Newfoundland season" (two summers and a winter); and 3) permanent (1993-1994: 20). Ethnomusicologist Gearóid Ó'hAllmhuráin has pointed out that the Irishmen who overwintered, or "wintermen," very likely "brought a corpus of *sean nós* (Irish language) songs and tunes associated with hiring fairs, land agitation, sedition and landlord-tenants relations with them to the New World" (2008: 35). This article is not intended to discount the repertoire brought by immigrants but to nuance the discussion of the recording repertoire and recognize the multiple sources of modern Irish-Newfoundland music.

4. Throughout this period, a local independent identity was growing. This is outlined in Lambert's history of the unofficial pink, white, and green flag of Newfoundland, which has recently been reinvigorated as a symbol of independence (2008).

5. The theme of nostalgia for an older and simpler way of rural life that disregards the hardships of poverty and the reasons for change is addressed in Sheridan's analysis of Newfoundland and Irish literature (2008).

6. More detailed analysis of all three case studies can be found in Osborne (2013).

7. The McNultys' music was also played on other NL radio shows such as *Shillelagh Showtime, Newfoundland Wholesale Program*, and *Newfoundland Soiree*, but the *Big6 Show* was the most consistent source. McNulty records could be bought at The Big 6, but also at Dicks Music Store on Water Street, RB Record Store at Rawlins Cross, and Hutton's Music Store (Barfoot, interview, March 12, 2010).

8. Figgy Duff was particularly inspired by the English folk revival and the band

Fairport Convention. For more information on Figgy Duff please see Saugeres (1991).

9. A milling frolic is the Canadian equivalent of a Scottish Gaelic practice known as a waulking. A milling frolic was a communal labour activity designed to beat woven wool in order to shrink it prior to making it into blankets or clothing (see Bennett 1980).

10. Unfortunately, I was unable to connect with Rob Murphy himself so I've gleaned biographical information from other musicians.

11. Many grammatical aspects of Irish are lost when used in a predominantly Anglophone context. According to an Irish language specialist, the grammatically correct title of the festival should be Féile Shéamuis Creagh.

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